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AMERICAN DOCTORS TALK GREEK

The spectacle of American doctors meeting together and holding animated conversations in Greek may be hard for the "man in the street" to believe possible, but it is claimed by a recent writer that such intercourse is practically necessary. Furthermore the assertion is made that Greek is not the only language of the medical fraternity of America, but that it comes near to being actually the universal medical language throughout the world.

Perhaps this is a somewhat exaggerated way of putting the fact that by far the largest majority of the technical words used by the physician are of Greek origin, and that without these terms the doctor would be stricken dumb, so far as the living language of his science is concerned.

If one doubts the validity of such a statement, he will do well to glance over the pages of any medical dictionary complete enough to give derivations, and he will quickly be convinced. Indeed, he may begin to think, and without straying far from the truth, that the best place from which to construct a medical vocabulary is the columns of a Greek lexicon. The story is told of a German exchange professor who came to the United States to lecture at one of the most famous medical schools. The subject which he announced was a new one to the medical professors, who could not find it in their dictionaries and were "stumped" as to what it was all about, until one of them thought to consult the professor of Greek, who told him the meaning of the term.

Some of the Greek derivations are jawbreakers to the Greekless: such words, for example, as anorexia, cholelithiasis, enteroptosis, leucemia, ophthalmoplegia, phlebitis, septicemia, myelomatosis. Naturally the technical terms of any science are "all Greek" to the layman. But such words are the flesh and blood of scientific language and are quite indispensable to the physician.

Many of these Greek words, however, are part and parcel of the language of our daily life. Modern scientific progress and the spread of learning have made everyone familiar with words like antiseptic, clinic, bacteria, typhoid, gastric, diagnosis, hygiene, embryo, and therapeutics. The very names of the departments in any medical school are nearly all Greek. They include, for instance, such divisions as anatomy, bacteriology, chemistry, dermatology, embryology, gynecology, histology, ophthalmology, pathology, pharmacology, physiology, surgery (by a longer process of transmission), therapeutics, and toxicology.

In fact, this nearly completes the average list of medical departments, with the exception of materia medica, medical jurisprudence, obstetrics, preventive medicine, and theory and practice of medicine, which are Latin (theory is Greek).

In view of the popular, and usually superficial, demand that every subject shall justify itself as being "practical," this illustration of one practical use of the language commonly regarded as least applicable to the concerns of active life is noteworthy. The man who knows Greek understands the vast majority of these medical terms without special study. To the Greekless student they constitute a difficult jargon, which he may be able to memorize, but which he remembers and comprehends only after much useless toil; he could not be sure that the results of his own researches were given a correct nomenclature to save his life. The most direct and certain way to master the medical vocabulary would seem to be to learn Greek first.

GREEK ATHLETICS AND MODERN

A recent guess of a college girl that the Greek verb *gymnazein*, "to exercise," meant "to do tricks" is a striking illustration of the slight effect that the real purpose of the gymnasium has as yet on our view of physical education. We still have much to learn from the ancients. In this connection the following paragraph from Mr. Norman Gardiner's book on *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* is of general interest.

"The practical value of these exercises explains their importance in Greek education. They constituted what the Greeks described as 'gymnastic,' the term 'athletic' being properly confined to competition. Gymnastics trained the body as music trained the mind. There was no artificial separation, no antagonism between the two such as has disfigured much of our modern education. The one was a complement of the other: together they comprised the whole of Greek education. An ill-trained body was as much a sign of an ill-educated man as ignorance of letters, and the training of the body by athletic exercises distinguished the Greek from the barbarian. The training began often as early as seven, but it did not end at the age when boys leave school. The Greek did not consider his education finished at the age of sixteen or seventeen, and he continued the training of body and mind till middle age or later, daily resorting to the gymnasium for exercise and recreation."

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The next annual meeting of the Association will be held at the University of Chicago, on April 21 and 22, 1916.